

Message Text

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FM USDEL FRANCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6854

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L USDEL FRANCE 06786

E. O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS: VS, PINT

SUBJECT: GVN- PRG POLITICAL TALKS: PRESS CONFERENCES MARCH 19

1. FOLLOWING FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF BIPARTITE POLITICAL TALKS AT LE CELLE- ST. CLOUD, MARCH 19, PRG AND GVN DELS HELD CONSECUTIVE PRESS CONFERENCES AT HOTEL MAJESTIC. DELEGATION CHIEF NGUYEN VAN HIEU MET PRESS FOR PRG, FOLLOWED BY PRESS SPOKESMAN DAN FOR GVN.

2. IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, DELIVERED IN EXCELLENT FRENCH, HIEU REAFFIRMED PRG GOOD WILL AND DESIRE TO PROCEED RAPIDLY TOWARD POLITICAL SOLUTION, DECRIED GVN CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS , AND SET FORTH AGENDA WHICH PRG HAD PROPOSED FOR BIPARTITE DISCUSSIONS (GUARANTEES OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES, FORMATION OF NCNRC, AND ORGANIZATION OF ELECTIONS).

3. IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, HIEU ASSERTED THAT QUESTION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES IS FUNDAMENTAL AND MUST BE RESOLVED BEFORE THERE CAN BE PROGRESS ON OTHER ISSUES. HE DEIVRED LENGTHY AND FAMILIAR DIATRIBE ON SUBJECT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS (ALTHOUGH SOME JOURNALISTS FELT STANDARD COMMUNIST JARGON WAS DELIVERED SOMEWHAT LESS HARSHLY THAN IS CUSTOMARY FOR PRG SPOKESMEN), AND REJECTED GVN CLAIMS RE POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD BY PRG. HIEU REPLIED IN USUAL CONFIDENTIAL

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FASHION WHEN NVA PRESENCE IN SVN WAS RAISED (I. E., DENYING THERE ARE ANY), SAID THAT OTHER MORE URGENT PROBLEMS

MUST BE ADDRESSED PRIOR TO DISCUSSION OF ANY DEMOBILIZATION OF FORCES AND, WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON PRESIDENT NIXON'S PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS RE NVA INFILTRATION, REFERRED JOURNALISTS TO GEN. TRA'S RECENT STATEMENT TO PRESS TO EFFECT THAT THIS IS UNFOUNDED AMERICAN ALLEGATION. HIEU ASSERTED IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION THAT HE HAS "FULL AUTHORITY" TO NEGOTIATE, AND HE AND VIEN HAD EXCHANGED LETTERS CONFIRMING THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTHORITY.

4. THRUST OF GVN PSOKESMAN DAN'S REMARKS CONCERNED GVN AGENDA PROPOSAL, IN WHICH DISCUSSION OF ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PRECEDENCE, FOLLOWED BY QUESTION OF FORMING NCNRC, TO BE FOLLOWED IN TURN BY DISCUSSION OF NVA WITHDRAWAL AND DEMOBILIZATION OF FORCES REMAINING IN SVN. DAN STATED THAT IN GVN VIEW, BIPARTITE TALKS IS FORUM IN WHICH SUBSTANCE AND MODALITIES OF ELECTION WILL BE DECIDED, WHEREAS NCNRC WILL ONLY ADMINISTER THOSE ELECTIONS. THUS, QUESTION OF ELECTIONS THEMSELVES DESERVES FIRST ATTENTION.

5. REFERRING TO PRG POSITION THAT "DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES" SHOULD BE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS, DAN SAID THAT SINCE THESE WOULD BE EXERCISED THROUGH ELECTIONS, THEY ARE PROPERLY SUBSUMED WITHIN DISCUSSION OF ELECTIONS. ASKED WHETHER GVN HAD IN MIND ELECTIONS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF PRESENT CONSTITUTION, DAN AVERRED THAT 1967 CONSTITUTION IS "FLEXIBLE," AND ELECTIONS ENVISAGED WOULD GO BEYOND IT. DAN EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT CONSTITUTION WILL REMAIN INTACT AND GVN WILL NOT AGREE TO ELECTIONS FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

6. IN ANSWER TO OTHER QUESTIONS DAN DESCRIBED ATMOSPHERE OF FIRST PLENARY AS "GOOD", NOTED THAT BOTH SIDES WISHED TO MAINTAIN INFORMAL AND NON-POLEMICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TALKS (AND HENCE WILL PUBLISH TEXTS OF SPEECHES ONLY BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT), AND DECLARED THAT GVN WILL APPROACH TALKS WITH SERIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE.

7. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO GVN DEL DEPUTY CHIEF PHONG,
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FIRST SESSION WAS INDEED BUSINESSLIKE AND ATMOSPHERE WAS RELATIVELY CORDIAL. HE SAID THAT FOLLOWING PREPARED PRESENTATIONS, TWO SIDES OFFERED CRITIQUES OF EACH OTHER'S AGENDA PROPOSALS, DURING WHICH GVN MAINTAINED TONE OF RESTRAINT, NOTING POINTS IN COMMON IN TWO PROPOSALS. TWO DELEGATIONS AGREED TO STUDY OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS RE AGENDA AND TO DISCUSS FURTHER IN SECOND PLENARY, MARCH 22.

8. DELEGATIONS REPORTEDLY SHOOK HANDS CORDIALLY AT BEGINNING OF SESSION, AND, AS DAN NOTED TO PRESS, VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE TEXTS OF BOTH SIDES' SPEECHES REFERRED TO INTERLOCUTERS AS " BROTHERS". ACCORDING TO PHONG, PRG CHIEF HIEU IS EFFECTIVE RAPID- FIRE SPEAKER, CONTRASTING WITH VIEN' S MORE TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN DELIVERY.
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